

ELDER FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS.<sup>1</sup>

Forty-two years next June I had become convinced of the truth of the principles of the Gospel that had been taught to me, at the age of seventeen years; having received the word from the testimony of our aged veteran Joseph Young, sen., president of the Seventies, in my native State, Massachusetts. I found the principles of the Gospel very harmonious to my feelings, although very much opposed to the views of my friends and neighbors. It offered to me the ancient blessings restored, if I would but receive them. I considered the matter carefully and prayerfully, and ascertained that there was but one way of finding out positively whether the Gospel was true or not, or whether what was taught to me as the gospel was indeed such; and that the whole subject was made to turn upon the saying of the Savior, "If any man will do His (the Father's) will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." And finding that there was only one way to come to a demonstration of the matter fairly and honestly, I concluded that if those gifts and blessings were restored to the human family, which were anciently given God's people to enjoy, I wanted to obtain them even at the risk of expatriation from my family, my friends and associates upon rendering a penitent obedience to the ordinance of baptism for the remission of my sins. The Lord answered my prayers, blessed me with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and gave me a certain revelation therewith, which made me to know that he took cognizance of me personally, and that this was none other than the great work of God. From that time I have never seen the moment that I doubted or felt uncertain or fearful concerning the progress of the work, or the ultimate triumph of its outcome. I have not only received such testimony, but also many of the various manifestations of the Spirit recorded in the Bible and promised in the revelations which mankind have a right, through obedience and faithfulness in this mortal life, to enjoy.

The gifts of prophecy, of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, of healing and being healed, and a great variety that we will not take time to enumerate, even to the casting out of devils. These gifts and blessings, signs, and mercies, have been bestowed upon not only myself, but upon my brethren of the Council, the faithful Elders, and the Saints generally. It is no strange thing among us that any one enjoys these blessings, all of them having been promised unto those who believe and obey the Gospel message. It is only to be wondered at that more of us do not get nearer to God and realize more of them than we do; it is the only or greatest regret that I have to-day that any unfaithfulness on my part in the performance of my duties should hinder me from participating more fully in the enjoyment of God's favors, and advancing more rapidly in the knowledge of himself and of his ways.

A man in this Church, who is an Elder in Israel, must have a degree of heroism if he is determined to be a servant of God, he must know what it is to be able to stand up in the spirit and power of his calling under all circumstances. God requires him to live and serve him with all his heart, with all his mind, might and strength; and to give himself wholly unto the work to which he has been called, and to have no other business on hand except those things which are subservient to the interests of his Church and Kingdom. I want to say to the brethren, that we as Elders in Israel have come not only to

prophecy but to revelation; I testify to you that while you are sustaining the Twelve Apostles as such—as the presiding quorum, and as prophets, seers and revelators in the Church of Christ, that your faith and prayers are not in vain, that God is answering them, that he is fulfilling them in your brethren of that quorum, and you will see from time to time more abundantly the fruits, blessings and powers resulting therefrom in a greatly increased degree. Therefore, continue your union, your faith, and prayers, and God will multiply his blessings still more abundantly upon us all. There is more union among the brethren of the Council, there is more love and fellowship existing among them, they are increasing in those graces and qualities which made the bonds of brotherhood strong and powerful to resist successfully the encroaching powers of darkness, and to become strong in the name of our God—to accomplish all the work required at our hands. Those graces we see most abundantly shining forth in the ministration and counsel of President John Taylor who is our leader.

I want to say, for the benefit of strangers present, that this work in which we are engaged, is the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, in which God has promised to gather together in one all things in Christ, be they things of heaven or things of earth, or, he might have said all persons and things, for that is the fact. All Christendom has become permeated with the belief that the second advent of the Savior is approaching and not very far off, so, also, the spirit of gathering has commenced, and if you will have your eyes open and watch the signs of the times, you will see that the spirit of the gathering is becoming more and more widespread, and is reaching Israel in all their abidings; they are becoming interested in and waked up to the importance of their gathering together. It is not only an item of news that the Israelites have got hold of the land of Canaan, but it is a commencement of the work that will gather the house of Judah and restore their land to fruitfulness—a land which will become glorious; and the House of the Lord which is to be built there is to be far more glorious than the former one.

Not only that, but the heavenly tocsin is sounding to the Ten Tribes, and they are preparing themselves to come forth and make manifest the power of God and be established with his people upon the land of Zion promised. And if any of you doubt it, enquire among the Indians of our land and you will find that they are having dreams and visions from above, and are beginning to enquire after the word of God, and to wonder whether they are cast off and forsaken, and to be crowded quite into the sea, or whether the promises made to their race by their ancient prophets and patriarchs shall be fulfilled as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

The Lord has commenced his work and it has taken a firm footing in the earth, and he has assured us that he will carry it on; and although we are frowned upon by forty millions of people who tell us that we cannot live and exercise ourselves in all the ordinances and institutions of Christ's Church in this land; let me tell you there are a hundred times forty millions in yonder heavens who are watching over and urging us to perform the heavenly requirements made to us from on high. Which do you think we shall give heed to? One of ancient times, when he thought that appearances were rather threatening, began to manifest considerable concern. And the prophet

Elisha, seeing the timidity of the young man, prayed unto the Lord to open his eyes. Whereupon, we are told, that he saw the mountain on which he stood was filled with horses and chariots of fire encircling the prophet round about, demonstrating to his entire satisfaction the words of his master which were uttered just previously, namely, that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them," the forty millions to the contrary notwithstanding. Hence then, whom shall we obey? My brethren and sisters, let us obey and serve the Most High God, hearken to his counsels and keep the commandments which he has given unto us, even every word that proceeds from his mouth, including the "word of wisdom" which he in his goodness has made known to us, for anything that is worthy for him to give unto us is worthy for us to keep in the most sacred manner.

Now let me say to the poor—for this conference has been fraught with blessing unto them—you who shall be forgiven your back indebtedness upon tithing, commence anew to tithe yourselves; be men of God, take hold of that duty and henceforth live determined to honor it with other requirements in the Church. The Savior anciently said, in speaking to the Jews, "If ye were the children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham." One of the most prominent features of father Abraham's life was to leave his native land, and go to a land which he knew not of, but which the Lord should show him. And having done this, there was a time when he was met by the minister of God, Melchisedek, when he was on his return on a triumphant victory over certain kings, on which occasion Melchisedek congratulated him on his success, when he, as if to reciprocate this minister's kindness, "gave him tithes of all," which law of tithing, if you please, he handed down to his generations after him. Let us regard it in like manner, for it is a standing law unto us upon this land. And if we do not live it and carry it out, with all other requirements, this, we are told, shall not be a land of Zion unto us.

And unto the brethren who shall be released from their P. E. Fund indebtedness, I would say, lift up your hearts and be glad, take fresh courage when you are released from that obligation, and endeavor to make yourselves more useful. Strengthen yourselves in the the name of the Lord; let the weak say, I am strong; and let all the people know that the Lord Most High is our God, and let us give ourselves wholly to his service.

Let the poor rejoice in the kindness and liberality of God and their brethren to them. Let the rich be glad that God has given unto them the means whereby they can bestow blessings upon the poor.

God requires in his mercy that they who have an abundance shall impart with a kindly regard for the destitute, or his blessing will not rest upon them and their substance.

My brethren and sisters, by the authority of the apostleship God has bestowed upon me, I feel to bless you in all your interests, your wives and children and all that pertain to you, your fields, your orchards and gardens, your flocks and herds; hoping and praying that we may become more abundantly devoted to him, and that he may accept of us and lead us forth from faith to faith, and from grace to grace until the little stone rolls down from the mountains and fills the whole earth.

May God preserve us in the faith as he has hitherto done, and help us to do his biddings so long as we dwell in the flesh, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**ELDER JOSEPH F. SMITH.**

I can bear testimony to the discourses we have had this morning. And I can also bear testimony to the great latter-day work in which we are engaged, for I know it to be the work of God.

In regard to the remarks of Brother Pratt, respecting the judgments of God that are about to be poured out upon the nations, if the people will take the trouble to read the predictions of the prophets concerning them, especially those referred to by the angel Moroni, when conversing with the Prophet Joseph Smith, at the opening up of this dispensation, I think they will be thoroughly satisfied and convinced, if they have any faith at all, that these coming judgments are not matters of mere speculation or supposition, nor of tradition handed down from remote ages, but that they are matters of fact, or will be ere long, when God shall consummate his designs against the wicked and ungodly of the world. For not only have prophets and inspired men declared these things, but they have been declared by the voice of the Lord, and by holy messengers sent from the presence of God, as well in modern as in ancient times.

The Angel Moroni, who visited Joseph Smith on the 21st of September, 1823, quoted the Scriptures concerning these judgments, and declared that the predictions of the prophets had not yet been fulfilled, but that they would be in this dispensation, and that the beginning was now at hand, even at the door. Among these quotations I would like to call your attention to Malachi, second chapter: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me," etc. "But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap, and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver," &c. "And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from the right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts.'

And again, Malachi, 4th chapter—all of which was quoted by Moroni—"For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Again, Moroni quoted the 11th chapter of Isaiah, in which are these words on this subject: "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Again, Acts, 3d chapter, 22d and 23d verses—quoted by Moroni just as they read in the New Testament—"A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you. \* \* Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you, and it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." Now this is strong language, and to the point. Moroni declared that this prophet was Christ at his second coming; that this scripture was not fulfilled, but was